



CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION AGENDA

5:30 PM - Tuesday, March 11, 2025

In-Person

Zoom Information Amended 3/10/2025

SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

PARTICIPATION: Members of the public may participate by being present at the Los Altos Council Chamber at Los Altos City Hall located at 1 N. San Antonio Rd, Los Altos, CA during the meeting. Public comment is accepted in person at the physical meeting location, or via email to PublicComment@losaltosca.gov.

RULES FOR CONDUCT: Pursuant to Los Altos Municipal Code, Section 2.05.010 "Interruptions and rules for conduct": Understanding that the purpose of the city council meetings is to conduct the people's business for the benefit of all the people, in the event that any meeting of the city council is willfully interrupted by a person or group of persons so as to render the orderly conduct of the meeting impossible, the mayor, mayor pro tem, or any other member of the city council acting as the chair may order the removal of the person or persons responsible for the disruption and bar them from further attendance at the council meeting, or otherwise proceed pursuant to Government Code Section 54957.0 or any applicable penal statute or city ordinance.

REMOTE MEETING OBSERVATION: Members of the public may view the meeting via the link below, but will not be permitted to provide public comment via Zoom or telephone. Public comment will be taken in-person, and members of the public may provide written public comment by following the instructions below.

<https://losaltosca.gov.zoom.us/j/81358708654?pwd=NipJxCZZPEw1JoW8RO55Dpvh9tsubg.1>

Telephone: 1-669-444-9171 / Webinar ID: 813 5870 8654 / Passcode: 203454

SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS: Prior to the meeting, comments on matters listed on the agenda may be emailed to PublicComment@losaltosca.gov. Emails sent to this email address are sent to/received immediately by the City Council. Emails sent directly to the City Council as a whole or individually, and not sent to PublicComment@losaltosca.gov will not be included as a public comment in the Council packet.

Please note: Personal information, such as e-mail addresses, telephone numbers, home addresses, and other contact information are not required to be included with your comments. If this information is included in your written comments, they will become part of the public record. Redactions and/or edits will not be made to public comments, and the comments will be posted as they are submitted. Please do not include any information in your communication that you do not want to be made public.

Correspondence submitted in hard copy/paper format must be received by 2:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting to ensure distribution prior to the meeting. Comments provided in hard copy/paper format after 2:00 p.m. will be distributed the following day and included with public comment in the Council packet.

The Mayor will open public comment and will announce the length of time provided for comments during each item.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

CONFIRM QUORUM

PUBLIC COMMENT

- [1.](#) 03-11-2025 Study Session Public Comments

DISCUSSION ITEM(S)

- [2.](#) The City Council will meet with the following Commission to discuss the 2025 Commission work plan:

-Park, Arts, Recreation, and Cultural Commission

ADJOURNMENT

SPECIAL NOTICES TO THE PUBLIC

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the City of Los Altos will make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting. If you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Clerk 72 hours prior to the meeting at (650) 947-2610.

From: [Pat Marriott](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: SPECIAL SESSION ITEM 1 MARCH 11, 2025
Date: Sunday, March 9, 2025 12:21:26 PM
Attachments: [3-11-25 public comment special session.pdf](#)

Please see attached.

PUBLIC COMMENT SPECIAL SESSION MARCH 11, 2025

Council Members:

There's been a great deal of discussion and criticism about the PARC Commission's lack of support for cultural events, particularly regarding the Iftar in 2024 and another scheduled for March 15, 2025.

I'm dismayed when my elected officials – who are supposed to represent me – behave in a disrespectful antagonistic manner toward other residents who sign up to serve the city.

Reviewing documents acquired through PRA requests, it's clear the PARC commissioners have done their due diligence and made appropriate decisions regarding Iftar in the absence of guidance from Council and Staff.

February 20, 2024 PARC Commission meeting

Staff report (attached) says: "The Muslims Around Los Altos group (MALA) is partnering with the Parks & Recreation Department to coordinate a few cultural events in Los Altos. ... Discuss the programs and request for funding presented by the MALA group and decide if funding from the Cultural aspect of the Public Art Fund is appropriate."

The MALA item was added to the agenda at the last minute without discussing with the commission chair. PARC reached out to Staff and the council liaison on February 18 asking for information, specifically for "... all applicable ordinances, permit requirements, fee waiver process rules/criteria, and the like pertaining to these areas: (a) separation of church and state."

Staff responded on the day of the meeting: "We do not have time. I also am not sure what is being asked."

No information was forthcoming.

At the meeting, MALA asked PARC for \$15,000 to support and promote an Iftar. After an in-depth discussion, the commission voted 4-1 vote against the request, based on concerns the event was religious.

Having already categorized the Iftar as cultural, Staff waived the room rental fee. They'd been having discussions with MALA regarding banners and room availability as early as February 5th.

After the commission meeting, the city manager and council liaison both thanked the chair for "making sure everyone's questions were answered and viewpoints were heard" and for having a "respectful and professional" discussion.

Some attendees of the March 31st Iftar told me they felt uncomfortable with the religious aspects, particularly the Call to Prayer. It appears commissioners were justified in denying support.

January 28, 2025 Council Meeting

The PARC commission was called on the carpet in a public meeting, given no opportunity to defend themselves against criticism, mainly from Mayor Dailey and Councilman Weinberg.

Newspaper reports surely proved embarrassing to the commissioners – and should be embarrassing to Council as well.

The February 23 Daily Post had a front-page article headlined, “Commission’s ‘culture of no’” with Mayor Dailey claiming the commission’s culture is “toxic” and it “has shown disrespect for Staff” – without corroboration.

The January 28 Town Crier headline was “Low-performing PARC commission under council review.” It ended with this paragraph quoting Councilman Weinberg: “If the response is, the Staff report is wrong, it’s biased, it’s full of half-truths, as someone who wasn’t there likes to call it, I am going to have a really difficult time finding a way to move forward with the commission as is.”

In other words, two elected officials passed a guilty verdict without hearing from the defendants, and any support for the defendants would only make their sentence worse!

If Council was unhappy with PARC’s work, a more appropriate approach would have been to have a meeting with the commission to hear their perspective and discuss ways to ensure their efforts aligned with Council’s wishes.

It must be noted that two commissions were merged to form PARC: Parks & Rec and Public Art. No guidance was ever provided about the new “cultural” aspect with respect to city policies, rules for evaluating financial and space requests, or how to distinguish between “cultural” and “religious” activities.

February 18, 2025 PARC Commission Meeting

Staff report agenda (attached) item 3: “Endorse the MALA Iftar Cultural Event.

RECOMMENDATION: Action to endorse the Iftar Dinner that is scheduled for March 15, 2025 as part of the PARC Commission’s efforts to increase cultural programming in Los Altos.”

Staff again decided the Iftar is a cultural event and waived the room rental fee. PARC was told they had “an opportunity to endorse the event. ... It’s just the public confirmation of accepting the event and that’s all.”

During the meeting, a commissioner said, “We as a commission need to make sure that we ... understand the city’s stance both legally and socially and legislatively to give us the scope where we know that we’re okay making that decision and saying this particular cultural event is okay even though it may have certain elements that we individually might perceive as being religious.”

Again, the commissioners **never** received any information, instruction or guidance on how to distinguish cultural from religious events.

Another commissioner pointed out that “Council has already said that they want this in this year. It’s already on the calendar, the room’s already reserved, so I don’t see that we have any choice other than to agree to it.”

The Commission Handbook says commissioners are appointed “to advise and make recommendations to the Council and Staff. ... there may be instances when Staff’s recommendations on an issue may differ from that of the Commission.”

Simply endorsing the Staff decision is counter to the commission’s charter, but commissioners obviously felt pressured to endorse Staff’s decision.

Culture or Religion: Who decides?

On February 11, I submitted a PRA request for “all documents the city uses to inform Council, Staff, commissioners and residents about what constitutes a religious vs. a cultural event.”

I received this response on February 25: “The City does not own, possess or maintain any responsive public records.”

In other words, there are no documented city standards defining cultural or religious events.

That means every council member, every Staff member, every commissioner has nothing to go on but personal interpretations.

References to the display of Christmas trees and Menorahs in public places don’t provide adequate guidance to distinguish a cultural from a religious event.

Court decisions regarding separation of church and state reveal how difficult the decision can be. As one author wrote, “Court decisions have made the law a bit murky.” The ACLU noted that “the court has adopted an approach that would see the lines between church and state hopelessly blurred, if not eliminated altogether.”

Lacking a common framework, it’s grossly unfair to criticize commissioners for using their best judgement while assuming Staff always makes the right call. Threats and bullying won’t improve anyone’s performance, but will promote a toxic culture and demean the city.

I urge Council to promote a team spirit at City Hall instead of pitting Staff against commissioners and residents.

Respectfully,

Pat Marriott Los Altos



ITEM #2

**PARKS, ARTS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL COMMISSION
AGENDA REPORT**

Meeting Date: February 20, 2024

Subject: Ramadan Event – Cultural Event Funding Request

Prepared by: Manny A. Hernandez, Parks & Recreation Director
Initiated by: Staff

Attachment(s): Presentation

Staff Recommendation

Receive program request and decide on potential funding for the program from the Cultural Art funding.

Environmental Review:

Not applicable

Summary/Project Description

The Parks, Arts, Recreation and Culture Commission, and the Parks & Recreation Department is committed to help expand cultural programs and events in Los Altos. This can be done through City programming and partnerships with cultural experts and organizations. The Muslims Around Los Altos group (MALA) is partnering with the Parks & Recreation Department to coordinate a few cultural events in Los Altos.

Muslims Around Los Altos, founded in 2023. They are a group of 20 civic-minded Muslim families from ethnically diverse backgrounds. They have partnered with Muslims living in Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Palo Alto, and Menlo Park making up over 150 individuals.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar and is observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting, prayer, reflection, and community. During Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn until sunset, abstaining from food, drink, smoking, and other physical needs. The fast is broken each evening with a meal called iftar. Ramadan is also a time for increased prayer, reading the Quran, and acts of charity. It is considered a time for spiritual growth, self-discipline, and empathy for those less fortunate. The end of Ramadan is marked by the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, a festive holiday that includes communal prayers, feasting, giving of gifts and charity.

MALA is requesting the PARC Commission sponsor a series of events open to all Los Altos residents, with the intent to create stronger community ties and cultural understanding.

The list of events and amount of requested sponsorship is as follows.

Iftar	\$8,000
Education	\$2,000
Giving Back	\$1,000
Banners (Supporting the Events)	\$4,000

Fiscal Impact:

Not to exceed \$15,000

Discussion/Analysis

Discuss the programs and request for funding presented by the MALA group and decide if funding from the Cultural aspect of the Public Art Fund is appropriate. MALA will provide a presentation.



TO: Parks, Arts, Recreation and Culture Commission
FROM: Manny A. Hernandez, Staff Liaison
SUBJECT: Endorse the MALA Iftar Cultural Event

RECOMMENDATION:

Action to endorse the Iftar Dinner that is scheduled for Mach 15, 2025 as part of the PARC Commission's efforts to increase cultural programming in Los Altos.

BACKGROUND

The Parks, Arts, Recreation and Cultural Commission, and the Parks & Recreation Department is committed to help expand cultural programs and events in Los Altos. This can be done through City programming and partnerships with cultural experts and organizations. The Muslims Around Los Altos group (MALA) is holding their 2025 Iftar event at the Community Center on March 15.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar and is observed by Muslims worldwide. During Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn until sunset, abstaining from food, drink, smoking, and other physical needs. The fast is broken each evening with a meal called iftar. It is considered a time for spiritual growth, self-discipline, and empathy for those less fortunate. The end of Ramadan is marked by the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, a festive holiday.

As part of the PARC Commission's effort to promote increased cultural events in the Los Altos Community, the Commission has the opportunity to endorse this cultural event that was very successful in 2024. The Commission will entertain a motion to endorse the 2025 Iftar cultural event and discuss at a later meeting possible ways to support the 2026 event.

Attachments:

A. None



City Council Agenda Report

Meeting Date: March, 11, 2025

Prepared By: Manny A. Hernandez

Approved By: Gabe Engeland

Subject: 2025 City Council – Parks, Arts, Recreation, & Cultural Commission Joint Meeting

COUNCIL PRIORITY AREA

- ☐ Business Communities
- ☐ Circulation Safety and Efficiency
- ☐ Environmental Sustainability
- ☐ Housing
- ☐ Neighborhood Safety Infrastructure
- ☒ General Government

RECOMMENDATION

City Council will discuss the 2025 Parks, Arts, Recreation, & Cultural Commission (PARC) Work Plan with the Commission.

FISCAL IMPACT

Not Applicable.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Not Applicable.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

None

BACKGROUND

Annually, each commission discusses and prepares work plan based upon the City Council annual priorities and budget, which shall be submitted and approved by the City Council. The work plan is a list of the anticipated topics, assignments and goals that the Commission will focus on over a 12-month period. From time to time the City Council may amend the approved commission work plan in order to achieve the goals of the city. Once prepared and submitted, the Work Plan is discussed with City Council at a joint meeting where Council will review previous year's accomplishments provide further direction and approve the proposed Work Plan.

ANALYSIS

At the January 28 City Council meeting, the PARC Commission was directed to do further work on their 2025 Work Plan for discussion at the joint meeting that would be scheduled for March.

This joint meeting would be scheduled for twice the usual allotted joint meeting time to also address concerns Council had with the current state of the PARC Commission.

DISCUSSION

City Council and the PARC Commission will discuss 2024 accomplishments, 2025 Work Plan and concerns City Council raised at the January 28, 2025 Council Meeting.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1. Commission approved 2025 Work Plan**

Parks, Arts, Recreation, & Cultural Commission

2025 Work Plan

Goal	Objective	Projects	Anticipated Completion	Priority Source	Assignment	Done?
INCREASE COMMUNITY OUTREACH	Identify ways to gather public feedback outside of regular commission meetings that will help support commission recommendations	Table at Farmers Market for public input on upcoming projects	September		Young	
		Gather public input, on-site, regarding facility improvements as it relates to pickleball at McKenzie Park	July		Valadez, Morris	
EXPANSION OF PUBLIC ART	Utilize resources to expand public art programs and displays	Explore and create partnership with Arts Los Altos for programming and displays	April		Morris, Couture	
COMMUNITY EVENT PARTICIPATION	Attend all community programs as a commission	Table at Summer Concert	July/August		Couture	
		Host a project room at Family Fun Day	November		Morris	
		Host the Halloween Movie night at Grant Park	October		Couture, Morris	
		Assist P&R staff with Spring Egg Hunt	April		Young	
INCREASE CULTURAL PROGRAMMING	Partner with cultural groups and participate in events as a commission	Partner with Greater Los Altos Chinese Association at the Moon Festival	September		Valadez	
		Endorse the 2025 MALA Iftar event and work with them on ways the commission can support the 2026 event	February & June		Valadez	
		Support the Justice Vanguard events	June		Valadez	
ONGOING PARKS AND ARTS INPUT AND PARTICIPATION	Complete the regular support of programs and functions within the purview of the commission	Select the theme and hang selected art in the Community Center Gallery art twice per year	August & February		Couture	
		Update the public art listing and brochure annually	January		Corrigan	
		Select the movie for the Halloween Movie Night	August		ALL	
		Select call for art and artists for Art Without Walls program	As necessary		ALL	